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WS 494.01: The Renaissance Debate on Women

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Spring 2003

The Renaissance Debate on Women

LS 494 ENLT 495 WS 494

Dr. Ruth Vanita

Wednesday 1.10-4 p.m. LA 138

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 11-12, Wednesday, 12-1, and by appointment.

Modern attitudes to women in the Western hemisphere are crucially shaped by the early modern debate that raged throughout the Renaissance and Reformation, and grew out of the medieval debate on women and gender. In this seminar course, we will read texts from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, in several different genres (prose pamphlets, lectures, lyrics, drama, extracts from epics), to examine the arguments presented by women and men on both sides of the question.

Texts

1. The Romance of the Rose by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean De Meun, translated by Charles Dahlberg (Princeton University Press, 1995).
2. The Book of the City of Ladies by Christine De Pizan, translated Jeffrey Richards (Persea Books, 1998).
3. Declamation on the Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex by Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (Chicago University Press, 1996).
4. The Worth of Women: Wherein Is Clearly Revealed Their Nobility and Their Superiority to Men by Moderata Fonte, Virginia Cox Editor & Translator (Chicago University Press, 1997).
5. Shakespeare, Othello.
6. Shakespeare, The Taming of the Shrew.
7. Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale.
8. Thomas Heywood, A Woman Killed with Kindness.
9. Facpac, available from Denny's Copy Stop, 2330 South Higgins (Corner of South and Higgins)

Requirements

Students are required to

- (a) attend classes regularly. Please inform me in advance if you are unable to attend a class. More than one absence not explained to my satisfaction will affect your grade. Acceptable explanations are illness (backed up by a medical certificate) and emergencies such as major sickness in the family or serious weather conditions.
- (b) keep up with the assigned reading, bring the text to class, and participate in class discussions. This course entails considerable amounts of reading. If you feel unable to do the reading, please do not take this class.

- (c) write a one-page reading paper on each text and bring it to class. Topics will be given in advance.
- (d) make a five to ten-minute class presentation on one or two texts, raising questions for discussion. The presentation may become the basis for one of the papers;
- (e) write a short paper on any one text (4-6 pages double-spaced typed);
- (f) write a long paper (8-10 pages double-spaced typed);
- (g) hand in theses and abstracts of both papers, in advance, and discuss the abstracts with me during office hours. The abstract must summarize your argument.
- (h) Topics for presentations and papers must be decided in individual consultation with me. Presentations must not be summaries of the texts. They must raise questions for discussion.
- (i) Graduate students must write longer papers – 8-10 and 12-15 pages respectively, and must demonstrate more background reading.

Grades

The short paper will be worth 20%, the long paper 20%, class attendance and participation 20%, theses and abstracts 15%, reading papers on the texts 15%, and the presentation 10%. Handing in papers late without an explanation satisfactory to me may result in a diminished grade.

Papers must (a) address the topic (b) have a clear thesis/argument (c) support the argument with textual evidence (d) adhere to the conventions of academic writing, including correct grammar and syntax.

If you have any condition, such as a physical or learning disability, that will make it difficult for you to complete the work as I have outlined it, please notify me in the first week of class.

Reading Schedule

This schedule is tentative. It is the student's responsibility to keep up with any changes.

January 29 Introduction

February 5 The Romance of the Rose, pp.31-99, and extract from Dante, *Paradiso*, and medieval lyrics on Mary (facpac).

February 12 The Romance of the Rose, pp. 153-178, 225-259, 347-end, and Christine de Pizan's response (facpac).

February 19 Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies, pp.3-120.

February 26 Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies, pp.120-257. **Thesis due, in class**

- March 5 Chaucer, The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale, and extract from Ariosto, Orlando Furioso (facpac). **Abstract due, in class.**
- March 12 Chaucer, The Clerk's Prologue and Tale and Dialogues between Ganymede and others (facpac).
- March 19 Cornelius Agrippa, Declamation on the Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex. **Short paper due, in class.**
- March 24-28 Spring Break.
- April 2 John Knox, First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women.
- April 9 Moderato Fonte, The Worth of Women.
- April 16 Shakespeare, The Taming of the Shrew. **Thesis due, in class.**
- April 23 Heywood, A Woman Killed with Kindness. **Abstract due, in class.**
- April 30 Shakespeare, Othello
- May 7 Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale. **Paper due, in class.**
- May 14, 3.20-5.20 Final meeting